

MATWATCH

16 Robin Hood Lane Jackson TN 38305

Hotline - 901-664-9246



VOL. 4, NO. 51-52

CHRISTMAS DOUBLE ISSUE

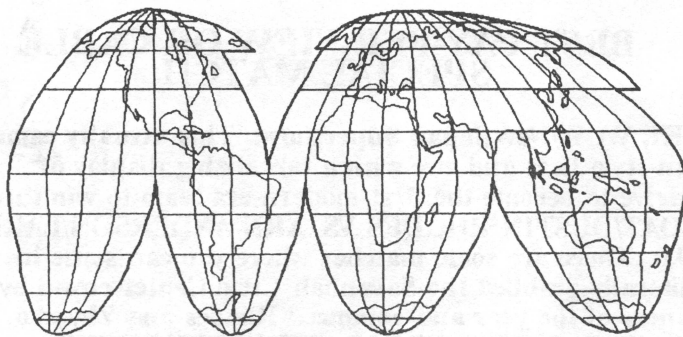
DEC. 23-JAN. 5

A Yuletide Greeting

MORE THAN THE MAT

*"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but
grievous words stir up anger."*

---Proverbs 15:1



This has been a year in which much more than pro wrestling has been a focal point in our lives.

When late in spring, I learned of the stroke of one of my greatest friends in life, Dan Gibson---a man some of you came to know as our first MATWATCHer OF THE YEAR in 1988---the world stood still for a while.

Here was the man who had been my first door-opener to the world of the mat and the arena. The man who took me to meet who would eventually become my top idol as a TV wrestling announcer, Ed Capral. The man who, when my father traveled extensively in my youth, was there for me when I needed a sounding board. The man who is, in all actuality, responsible for MATWATCH today.

The next week, coincidentally, I was headed home for a few days and had a chance to see Mr. G. He wasn't ready for a meal of trout almondine at Morrison's. But he knew he could count on me. It meant more to me than anything in this entire year to be able to pump up Mr. G and tell him, "You're gonna make it. It's just going to take some time." It was a small return for what he has meant and is in my life.

Over the next few weeks, I asked those of you who could spare a card and a stamp to write Mr. G and give him a word of encouragement. Never did I dream the outpouring of support from you MATWATCHers. Within the next month, literally hundreds of letters and notes flooded into Waycross, Georgia. People, significant names within the mat industry took a moment to pick up the phone and call Mr. G. So many of you who have taken the interest to buy this publication week after week dropped him a line to say, "I don't know you. But if you're a friend of Steve's, you're a friend of mine. Get well soon." Mr. G's wife, Colleen---the backbone of raising two sons with whom I grew up in Georgia---was overwhelmed with the outpouring of emotion. As she wrote me, "You'll never know how much these cards have had to do with lifting Dan's spirits. I'd tell him every day when some more would come in, 'These are some of Steve's friends. It would always bring a smile to his face.'"

As I have told many of you, Dan Gibson is a walking miracle this Christmas. He is literally walking, enjoying the joys of the season with his family and through hard work, therapy, your encouragement and much prayer, has taken the high road to recovery. And he is grateful to all of you. Undeniably, so am I.

This is the story of Christmas to me in 1991 and I have used the symbol of the globe on this page because so many of these cards to Mr. G came from all over the U.S., Canada and the entire world. It is symbolic of what we can all do if we pull together for a common, positive cause.

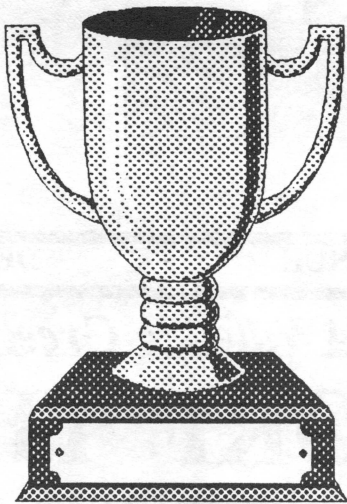
Dan Gibson never was a wrestler. He just liked the stars of the ring. Enough so to share it with his sons and with a preacher's kid who lived in the same town. That's somewhat what he is---always sharing with someone. I hope many of you have had a chance to know a Mr. G in your life. Believe me, I know you are richer for it.

It is in that spirit that I wish all of you the most uplifting and joyous Christmas, Hannukah or peaceful season of the holidays. As I have said, life is much too short for us to be wrapped up in tensions and disputes, which seem to plague both the wrestling and mat newsletter industry all too often. That's something which only becomes more real, the longer you live. May God's greatest and richest blessings be on you and your families now and in 1992.

Steve Beverly

MATWATCH

Page 2/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5



Best and the Rest of '91

The Matties

As we opt for a different format with our **MATWATCH: THE FINAL CHAPTER** from past annuals, we have eschewed mail-in awards ballots. But we do have our own perspective on the top performances in TV wrestling for 1991. So, trudging into the unknown, we present the 1991 **MATTIES** for mat tube excellence:

BEST PAY-PER-VIEW OR CABLE SPECIAL MATCH

1. **STEINERS VS. HIROSHI HASE/KENSUKE KASAKI, WCW/New Japan Supershow:** This actually came close to lifting the serene Japanese audiences to American-style heat and awe with a tantalizing display of power moves and speed, which culminated the Steiners' drive to become the first modern-era team to win three international titles simultaneously. 2. **RICKY STEAMBOAT/DUSTIN RHODES VS. ARN ANDERSON/LARRY ZBYSZKO, TBS Clash of the Champions, November 1991:** There are some matches where you can sense in the opening minute it's going to be special. Steamboat literally grabbed the Savannah Civic Center crowd by the throat, inspired Anderson to one of his top performances of the year and enhanced Rhodes and Zbyszko. As electric a crowd reaction for WCW since Flair-Sting in 1988. 3. **STEINERS VS. STING/LEX LUGER, Superbrawl:** One of the best babyface vs. babyface matches ever, only marred by the Nikita Koloff run-in to upset the finish.

BEST WEEKLY SERIES MATCH

1. **STING VS. CACTUS JACK, WCW World Wide:** One of the most brutal contests you'll ever watch with a good 20-minute time frame and extraordinary bumps. Certainly, the most memorable of the year on episodic TV. 2. **RICKY STEAMBOAT VS. BOBBY EATON, World Championship Wrestling:** Last weekend's confrontation ended with a legitimate finish before the post-curricular activity. The two veterans appeared to strengthen each other as they went from the ring to the seats to chairs to quality wrestling. 3. **CACTUS JACK VS. BRIAN PILLMAN, World Championship Wrestling.** What can you say about these two aerialists which hasn't been said? They went from the mezzanine level to the floor with all the arsenal one could find in a nine-minute match.

BEST SUPERCARD/SPECIAL

1. **CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS, TBS, Savannah, Ga.:** Again, only one show but proof positive of what this group could do without Ric Flair and with a cornucopia of strengths. A great resurgence for this group. 2. **ROYAL RUMBLE, WWF:** Perhaps the most balanced and best-produced spectacular ever by this organization. 3. **STARRCADE '90:** Thankfully, the end of the Sting-Black Scorpion affair but a strong international tag tourney, an Anderson/Windham vs. Doom bloodbath and Luger-Hansen match.

BEST WEEKLY SERIES

1. **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING, TBS:** This show wouldn't have had our vote at midyear but the strong producing in the fourth quarter has been consistent and reflected in the ratings. 2. **SUPERSTARS OF WRESTLING, WWF:** Much more entertaining than in past years with more angles than ever before. 3. **GLOBAL SUPERCARD, ESPN:** This primarily for the summer tournaments which introduced a number of younger performers, fresh characters and a light heavyweight division.

BEST NEW CHARACTER(S)

1. **THE PATRIOT, Global:** Largely because it is one of the few attempts to build a promotion around a masked man which has worked, despite some flaws in Del Wilkes' overall game. 2. **LIGHTNING KID, Global:** If the light heavy divisions will ever take off, this guy will be a major star. 3. **ALEXANDRA YORK, WCW:** Sure, it may be a joke that if you get placed in the York Foundation, you're on the way down. But Alex is the first female character, to date (until Madusa), to be treated as a non-bimbo and Terri Boatright has nothing to be ashamed of.

BEST PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER

1. **JIM ROSS, WCW:** Jim has taken more shots in

MATWATCH

Page 3/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

BEST PLAY-BY-PLAY (Continued):

publications this year than in any other, largely because of the sheer volume of shows he does. But Jim still is at the top of the game and the refocusing of his and Paul E. Dangerously's team roles before Paul E.'s suspension and his call of the Steamboat/Rhodes title win at the CLASH are still tops. 2. VINCE McMAHON, WWF SUPERSTARS: Joe Pedicino will have a heart attack at this selection. While I still differ with some of Mr. McMahon's storyline philosophies, he has been as solid as ever this year, primarily because he has had to break in new color commentators and work harder to get them over. 3. LANCE RUSSELL, WCW PRO: The most difficult explanation in the world is why Lance was removed from this show and none of it is valid. The only fault is WCW's for not structuring Lance in a vehicle which showcased his talents in their best light.

BEST COLOR COMMENTATOR

1. PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY, WCW: When he got off the superbrat binge where he and Ross were calling each other liars every week, he was as unpredictable as any in the business. 2. BOBBY HEENAN, WWF: Although Heenan's work at SURVIVOR SERIES and THIS TUESDAY IN TEXAS was almost David Crockett-obnoxious, he's still the best humorist in the business. 3. SCOTT HUDSON, GWF: He only got better every week and I only hope some way will be found to return him to the color mike on a regular basis.

COMEBACK PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1. CACTUS JACK, WCW: This guy, unless sidetracked by politics or injuries, is on his way to becoming one of the greatest in the game and has been cast in a role to prove the lunacy of Ole Anderson for firing Cactus in '90. 2. ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER, WCW: Incredibly, his pairing with Cactus was as complimentary a role as this 54-year-old could have and their summer matches stole the show before whatever crowds WCW had. 3. JOE PEDICINO, GWF: Simply for getting Global on the air when virtually the entire newsletter and wrestling industry had given him up for dead.

BEST SINGLE PERFORMANCE

1. RANDY SAVAGE/LIZ POFFO, "The Reunion," Wrestlemania VII: Was there a more memorable moment during 1991 in the best-booked sequence of the year? 2. PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY, "The Coldcocking of Jason Hervey," Clash XV: Perhaps the best babyface move of a heel in 1991. Bashing Hervey with that phone was the scene hardcore fans

most wanted to see. 3. EDDIE GILBERT, "We Have Herd Enough," PRO WRESTLING SPOTLIGHT: This is actually a radio award but whether you agree with him or not, Gilbert literally laid his career on the line in calling for Jim Herd's ouster on John Arezzi's program and the emotion was classic Gilbert.

BEST ANGLE

1. RANDY & LIZ REUNION, Wrestlemania VII: The best shifting of emotion from hardcore heel Randy to a kinder, gentler Savage. 2. VINCE GETS NAILED, WWF Superstars: McMahon, reportedly, always wanted to be in an angle and it had the same impact as the day Gordon Solie was decked on Georgia Championship Wrestling, though it would have been stronger if Vince had come out in a neck brace to begin the next week's show. Ric Flair was at his heel best. 3. BASHING OF JASON HERVEY, TBS Clash XV: If this had taken place in Philadelphia, Paul E. would have received a standing O.

BEST TV PERSONALITY

1. JIM CORNETTE, LPWA: Some of his funniest work ever has been done on this weekly ladies' wrestling series and his line on WWEU's SATURDAY NIGHT SUPERSTARS in Atlanta about a puppeteer: "He's trying to kill Atlanta quicker than Jim Herd," was as memorable as you'll find. 2. PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY, WCW: One always wonders what's going to come out of this guy's mouth next and that's what keeps him fresh. 3. RODDY PIPER, WWF: His work at the color mike improved greatly this year but he never stopped being that appealing character.

So, what about the rest of 1991? Here goes:

WORST PAY-PER-VIEW/CABLE SPECIAL MATCH

1. CHAMBER OF HORRORS, WCW Halloween Havoc: There have been worse performances (take a look at any Oz or Warlord match) but the ending with Abdullah the Butcher in the electric chair was as distasteful as I've seen in years. Besides, it wasted half of WCW's strong performers early. 2. OZ VS. TIM PARKER, Superbrawl: Perhaps the most unpopular pay-per-view match of 1991 with two people WCW had absolutely no business charging home viewers to see. 3. EL GIGANTE VS. ONE-MAN GANG, Great American Bash: Perhaps as weak as any you'll ever see with two big men.

WORST WEEKLY SERIES MATCH

1. WARLORD VS. JIM DUGGAN, Prime Time Wrestling. This is the one where Duggan spanked Slick but for two veterans, it was a terrible ex-

MATWATCH

Page 4/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

WORST WEEKLY SERIES MATCH (Continued)

hibition and totally forgettable. 2. BRUTE FORCE VS. TIM STRONG/MACK WATERS, Pro Wrestling '91: When Joe Pedicino said (of Waters), "Stick a fork in him," in this high-schoolish Georgia All-Star affair, I knew not even the host/promoter would buy this one. 3. KENNY ARDEN/JAMIE KYLE VS. DARRELL MONROE/STAN WESTMORELING, AAWF: You could actually have picked from a host of this Chattanooga-based outfit's matches but this is as good an example as any.

WORST WEEKLY SERIES

1. AAWF: Probably the worst production values, short of one of its predecessors, SOUTHEASTERN CHAMPIONSHIP. 2. WWF PRIME TIME: This show's packaging set it apart from an aesthetic standpoint with the live audience but any show which has to lead off with wisecracks while its hosts are taking a wiz in the bathroom is pretty well in the gutter. And just how many times can you watch the Nasty Boys spraypaint the Titan building? 3. IWCCW: Do you now have the Vic Steamboat-Tony Atlas title match down by heart?

WORST PLAY-BY-PLAY ANNOUNCER

1. GORILLA MONSOON, WWF: Teamed with Heenan, Gorilla is acceptable. But to have obviously missed Sean Michaels being pinned at SURVIVOR SERIES and then never acknowledge the error was inexcusable. Compounded when he tried to make Marty Jannetty as the heel for the Rockers. 2. MIKE PARADISE, UIW: Perhaps, vocally, the most uninteresting and uninspired announcer I've ever heard. 3. COREY MACKLIN, USWA/WMC: Corey is an awfully nice guy but all he can do is repeat virtually every word Dave Brown utters.

WORST COLOR COMMENTATOR

1. DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE, WCW PRO: At least this group has finally had the sense to remove this lech character and his perpetual "good God" off the tube. 2. MISSY HYATT, WCW MAIN EVENT: Not the worst move WCW has ever made to get her off the commentary mike. Just so much whining one can take. 3. MICHAEL ST. JOHN, USWA/WMC: Michael is a good radio personality but simply miscast at the mat mike.

WORST NEW CHARACTER(S)

1. OZ, WCW: As we've said, perhaps the most

unwelcome new personality introduced in the three-year TBS/WCW era and as Jim Ross aptly said on one broadcast, hopefully on his way back down the yellow brick road. 2. SPIRIT OF AMERICA, USWA: What can you say about a guy whose gimmick is a red-white-and-blue garbage can to "clean up filth" and who comes to the ring to Kate Smith singing "God Bless America?" Patriotic, yes. Silly, even more yes. 3. PATRIOTS, WCW: The fireman and the private never related to the theme and all too unfortunately, began being called Chip and Dip by ringsiders.

DECLINING STAR(S) OF THE YEAR

1. KEVIN SULLIVAN, WCW: At long last, gone. 2. FREEBIRDS, WCW: Unfortunately, appear to be on their way to becoming the lower-card designated jobbers. 3. GREG VALENTINE, WWF: Seems to be hitting that career stage called twilight fast.

WORST ANGLE

1. JAKE ROBERTS HITS LIZ POFFO, This Tuesday in Texas, WWF: As distasteful as the Persian Gulf War exploitation was, I'll decry any man-hitting-woman angle over it. And this was the worst ever shown by the number one promotion. 2. ERIC EMBRY DECKS MISS TEXAS, USWA/WMC: When Embry creamed the woman not once, but twice, and opened her up, it left no shame with this promotion which is the king of abusing females. 3. SGT. SLAUGHTER PERSIAN GULF EXPLOITATION, WWF: Crassly insulting, tasteless and embarrassing to watch. 4. KING COBRA BITES RANDY SAVAGE, WWF: Those cutaway shots of the children crying ought to insult every parent in America. Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television ought to be on their hides for this.

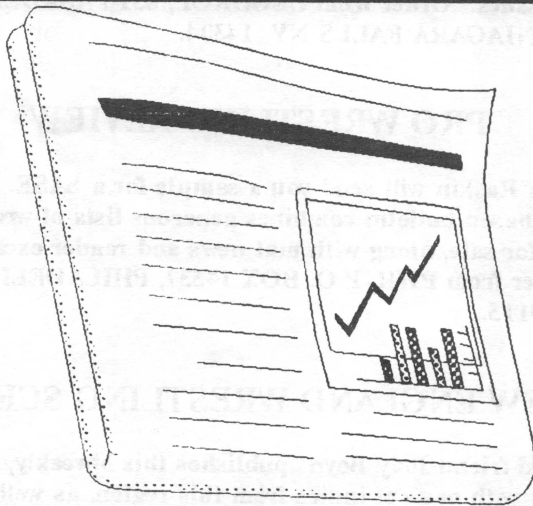
WORST TV PERSONALITY

1. HERB ABRAMS, UWF: When a guy has to stoop to suggest he wishes urine had been thrown on a competitor, as Abrams did, he is beneath respect of any viewer. 2. EL GIGANTE, WCW: Again, a nice guy and the kids like him but it's hard to be a great personality when you're forced to say, "I wan da belt." 3. DINO BRAVO, WWF: I think this is one Scott Hudson, Steven DeTruth and I will unanimously agree upon for eternity.

Remember, in the 1991 MATWATCH annual, MATWATCH: THE FINAL CHAPTER, we'll review the top 15 television news stories of the year and analyze why they were the most influential.

And, as always, this particular perspective is the view of the editor and certainly not exhaustive or necessarily correct. Any poll or balloting you participate in is equally as accurate. As Skip Caray so adroitly says, "If we're all of the same mind, that's when we're in a heap of trouble."

MATWATCH CATALOGUE



THE WRESTLING OBSERVER

I can't believe there are many MATWATCHers who don't likewise take the OBSERVER, since many of you first heard about MATWATCH from Dave Meltzer. Dave provides the most respected weekly coverage of the mat business and is as important to following the game as THE STAR TREK COMPENDIUM is for Trekkies.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$6 for 4 issues. Order from THE WRESTLING OBSERVER, P.O. BOX 1228, CAMPBELL CA 95009-1228. Highest recommendation.

ARENA REPORT

A print version which literally puts you in the seats at the coliseum, along with nostalgic columns, guest writers, crisp commentary from editor (and good friend) Ron Lemieux and Scott Hudson's Georgia Wrestling Journal.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1 per biweekly issue. Order from ARENA REPORT, P.O. BOX 952547, LAKE MARY FL 32795-2547. Suggest any reader sample Ron's bulletin.

THREE COUNT NEWSLETTER

This will be the next major bulletin and only needs time to carve out its niche. Alex Marvez is already a nationally-syndicated mat columnist and sportswriter for two Florida newspapers. Incisive interviews, perspective and solid coverage of issues, not frivolous potshots. A literate publication for the '90s, published four times a month.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$6 (month), \$18 (three months), \$33 (six months), \$66 (annual). Order from THREE COUNT, P.O. BOX 12795, GAINESVILLE FL 32604-0795.

Since we announced our retirement in late summer, so many have written or asked, what newsletter do you recommend, now that you're exiting the field? It's so hard to settle on one or two but we will offer you a list of the ones we regularly receive, or have been asked to plug by editor/publishers (guys, we'll plug tape lists, etc., in our first 1992 edition). Some, we'll have our own personal notes about but my suggestion is to try the ones which look appealing to you and sample them with a short-term subscription. Please understand: at least 57 known bulletins are on the market today but only about a dozen have more than 100 subscribers and many do not stay in business for a lengthy period.

GLOBAL WRESTLING NEWS SERVICE

This may be the oldest publication on the market and Tom Burke not only offers clippings and results but bits of nostalgia. Particularly good for veteran fans. Tom and veteran insider Dan Reilly also co-host a respected wrestling radio talk show in the Northeast.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1.50 per monthly issue. Order from GLOBAL WRESTLING NEWS SERVICE, 31 GROVELAND ST., SPRINGFIELD MA 01108.

SLAMMERS WRESTLING NEWSLETTER

Tailored around the activities of the best mat gym in the country and the most dedicated facility to the preservation of ring history. Owner/editor Verne Langdon offers a monthly merchandise listing. You'll want to visit SLAMMERS WRESTLING GYM after reading this.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1 per issue. Order from SLAMMERS, P.O. BOX 1602, STUDIO CITY CA 91614.

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Regularly recognized as a leader in the field. Coverage weekly of major promotions and assorted guest columnists, along with ratings of TV specials and performers (and occasional carvings of Thanksgiving birds) and editor Wade Keller's BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE column.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$5 for 4 issues (weekly). Order from PRO WRESTLING TORCH, P.O. BOX 201844, MINNEAPOLIS MN 55420.

MATWATCH

Page 6/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

MATWATCH CATALOGUE

(Continued from Page 5)

WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT NEWS JOURNAL

Harvey Cobb has been in the newsletter field longer than I has featured guest columns, letters, clippings and results from his Virginia base but Harvey is closing shop.

Harvey still has tape information from his address, 2619 RUFFIN WAY, NORFOLK VA 23504.

PRO WRESTLING SUSHI

To quote the editor himself, Jeff Mullins: "Seriously humorous coverage of a humorously serious sport!" That, in itself, describes this bulletin which looks at wrestling, newsletters, its editors and top performers with a wink and a laugh. Sometimes, it takes this to keep a joking edge to the weekly soap opera. Get this one! Published every other month.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1.50 per issue. Order from SUSHI, P.O. BOX 36189, SAN JOSE CA 95158.

WRESTLING PERSPECTIVE

I would like to see this bulletin break out of the pack. Some of the most thoughtful, carefully-reasoned viewpoints come from Paul MacArthur and Dave Skolnick and I strongly suggest you sample their work. It will definitely make you think.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1.25 per issue (U.S./Canada) or \$2.25 per (overseas). Order from WRESTLING PERSPECTIVE, P.O. BOX 401, CAMILLUS NY 13031-0401.

MAT MARKETPLACE

I've always felt Sheldon Goldberg has done a quality job of tailoring this publication to a specific interest group, mat collectors and memorabilia chasers. You'll enjoy it.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$2.50 per issue, \$12 for 6 issues (\$15 for 6 overseas). Order from MAT MARKETPLACE, P.O. BOX 2371, JAMAICA PLAIN NY 02130. Published every other month.

WRESTLING CHATTERBOX

Georgiann Makropolis absolutely loves the mat game and it shows by her concern with CHATTERBOX. Our sympathies, likewise, go to her after the tragic death of her father. WC is a 26-32 page monthly effort.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20 for one year. I do not have the current address for Georgiann but will offer it next issue.

LEGDROP

Mike Sawyer publishes this out of Niagara Falls NY and his six-pager comes out weekly with perspective and news, particularly on the WWF.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Special rates through Jan. 1 are \$5 for 5 issues. Order from LEGDROP, 831 PASADENA AVE., NIAGARA FALLS NY 14304.

PRO WRESTLING REVIEW

Alan Raskin will send you a sample for a SASE. The Philly-based bulletin combines generous lists of wrestling items for sale, along with mat news and reader exchanges.

Order from PWR, P.O. BOX 14537, PHILADELPHIA PA 19115.

NEW ENGLAND WRESTLING SCENE

Good friend Jody Boyns publishes this biweekly, heavily loaded with news of indies from this region, as well as the WWF/WCW cards. He'll send a sample for a SASE.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$7 (6 months), \$15 (year). Order from Jody at 521 PINE ST., APT. 304, MANCHESTER NH 03104.

CALIFORNIA WRESTLING REPORT

Well-tailored regional coverage here. Tony has been publishing CWR for some time now and I think you'll enjoy his perspective.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 50 cents per issue. Order from Tony at 7752 CALINA WAY, LA COSTA CA 92009.

PRO WRESTLING SPOTLIGHT

I assume this is going to be the title of John Arezzi's new bulletin, based on his highly-successful New York radio series. If it's anything like the show, it'll be a hit. John hopes to fill our slot by covering heavily the media, with focus on the nation's radio/talk shows, TV ratings and breaking stories. John starts at the first of the year, so write him for a sample at: PRO WRESTLING SPOTLIGHT PRODUCTIONS, 136 NORTH CARLL AVE., SUITE 125, BABYLON NY 11701. Highly recommended.

WRESTLING THEN AND NOW

Editor Evan Ginzburg always tells me nostalgia is a hard sell but you fans over 30, in particular, will enjoy this one. I find myself reliving some of the great moments in mat history when I read this. You will, too.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$1.25 per issue, \$15 (year). Overseas add \$1 per issue. Order from Evan at P.O. BOX 471, OAKLAND GARDENS STATION, FLUSHING NY 11364.

(More Catalogue on Page 12)

MATWATCH

Page 7/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

(ED. NOTE: Because of early deadline for double issue, a number of weekly series episodes are omitted and no ratings are offered but a few advance episodes for the following week are included, as provided):

IDIOTS

Dec. 21-29

(WWF/USA) - [PRIME TIME]: {McMAHON GROUP/Guest Panelist: Slick, who says he's changed & announces he's praying for Bobby Heenan}; Tito Santana d. Berzerker by DQ when Mr. Fuji trips up Tito; (SPECIAL REPORT) Hulk Hogan on Royal Rumble/title situation; Undertaker d. Mark Thomas; Owen Hart/Jim Neidhart d. Kato/Brooklyn Brawler; (SEG) Freddie Blassie presents "Wrestler of the Year" trophy to Bret Hart; (TUESDAY IN TEXAS) Randy Savage d. Jake Roberts but Jake DDTs Randy after, then decks Liz across ring when she comes to attend Randy; (SEG) A berzerk Randy vows revenge & grabs Sean Mooney in his rage; Legion of Doom d. Bob Wissemann/Nick Tarantino; Ric Flair d. Sean Michaels w. feet on ropes after Marty Jannetty helps Sean back in ring. Rockers have a tiff after; Ted DiBiase d. Dale Wolfe; (ROYAL RUMBLE REPORT) Quick clips of contestants' hype.

(SOUTH ATLANTIC) - Greg Bobchick d. Roughhouse Graham; Rick Slagle d. Crusader; (SEG) Tommy Angel/Tommy Seabolt stripped of tag titles because of Seabolt's injury & belts returned to German Stormtroopers; Helmut Hessler d. Tyrone Knox; Ivan Koloff d. Wahoo McDaniel; (ANGLE) Graham tries to punch Bambi but Bobchick stops him & decks him.

(WCW/TBS) - [WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 12/21]: {REPLAY} Post-match attack on Ricky Steamboat by Steve Austin/Bobby Eaton & save by Barry Windham; Van Hammer d. Zan Panzer; Big Josh d. Chuck Coates; Cactus Jack/Abdullah the Butcher d. Rick Ryder/Scott Allen; Arachnabrad d. Bob Cook; Diamond Dallas Page d. Johnny Rich; (2-3 FALLS/LOSER-LEAVE-TBS FOR 60 DAYS) Young Pistols d. Patriots. Teams split two falls, then Tracy Smothers d. Curtis Thompson in 3rd fall w. feet on ropes; Mike Graham d. Thomas Rich; (WCW TV TITLE) Steamboat d. Austin by DQ for over-the-top. Windham saves but Eaton/Austin double on him until Steamboat revives and saves.
[12/28]: Steamboat/Dustin Rhodes d. Chris Sullivan/John Peterson; (SEG) Paul E. Dangerously comes out in tux with Dangerous Alliance & threatens to do to Rhodes/Steamboat/Windham/Ron Simmons what's been done to Sting. Paul recites Latin funeral mass; Cactus d. Ian Weston; Terry Taylor d. Rick Ryder; (ANGLE) Alexandra York cites recent problems w. Taylor & says York Foundation will have to have called meeting while she takes her hair down. Taylor says, "I'll sure be at that meeting;" Curtis Hughes vs. P.N. News no contest when Hughes attacks P.N.N. before match & decks 3 jobbers trying to save; Eaton d. Joey Maggs; Larry Zbyszko d. Scott Sandlin. Stretcher comes for Sandlin & Sid Zbyszko knocks Scott off; Johnny B. Badd d. Chuck Coates. Coates ambushes Badd after & J.B. decks him; Pistols d. Sean Malone/Gary Michael. Patriots in stands, leading crowd in chant, "Pistols suck." After match, they try to run in but Todd Champion posted & Curtis Thompson spiked.

(GLOBAL/SYN) - [MAJOR LEAGUE 12/21]: Sam Houston d. Bull Pain after Baby Doll runs in to neutralize Samantha; (WINNING MOMENT) Barry Horowitz demands replay of win over Terry Daniels; Gary Young d. Horowitz; Chaz d. Lightning Kid on reversal when Jerry Lynn tells ref Kid tossed salt in Chaz's eyes. Lynn & Kid go at it & Lynn lays out Kid w. sleeper, then drapes light heavyweight belt across him. Davis Bros. carry Kid back to dressing room; (GLOBAL TAG TITLE) John Tatum/Rod Price d. Scott Putski/Steve Simpson

when Skandor Akbar distracts ref & Sweet Daddy Falcone decks Simpson & drops Tatum on top for pin.

[MAIN EVENTS 12/21]: The Patriot d. Falcone; Lynn d. Buster Blackheart; (CAGE) Tug Taylor/Terry Garvin d. Davises when Tug grabs chain tossed in by Kid (who had KO'd "keeper of the key" Chaz w. chair) & decks Tom Davis. Lynn comes to ringside & puts Kid to sleep; (TAPE) Kid d. Ben Jordan; Patriot d. Blackheart; Scott Anthony d. Lynn.

[MAJOR LEAGUE 12/28]: {Yearender, Part I/Tourney Finals '91} (GWF TV TITLE FINAL) Patriot d. Buddy Landell; (L.T. HWT. FINAL) Kid d. Lynn; (GWF TAG FINAL) Chris Walker/Simpson d. Anthony/Rip Rogers; (NOTHING BUT DeTRUTH) Steven DeTruth insults Scott Hudson & explains why he's come to Global; (NORTH AMERICAN FINAL) Patriot d. Al Perez; (GWF TV PLAYOFF) Eddie Gilbert d. Handsome Stranger.

(GLOBAL/ESPN) - [Mon./BEST OF SUPERCARD]: Adrian Street d. Rip Rogers by DQ when Makhn Singh runs in; Gary Young/Brian Atlas d. Doug Sommers/Kenny the Stinger; Big Bully Busick d. Ray Evans; Pain d. Daniels; The Patriot d. John Tatum; (6-MAN) Tatum/Price/Falcone d. Larry Green/Todd Overbow/Manuel Villalobos; Renegade Warriors d. Butch Blackheart/Tony George.

[Tue./BEST OF SUPERCARD]: Cactus Jack d. Steve Dane; Patriot d. Cuban Assassin; PYTs d. Chaz/Garvin when Chris Love interferes; Renegades d. Ed Robinson/El Diablo; Tatum/Price d. Daniels/Rick Garren; Tatum/Price d. Young/Jeff Gaylord; (GWF TV TITLE) Eddie Gilbert d. Houston.

[Wed./SUPERCARD]: {GWF TAG TITLE} Tatum/Price d. Simpson (who solos) to win belts; Pain d. Houston when Samantha runs in; (WINNING MOMENT) Horowitz d. Daniels to become "The Winner;" Lightning Kid d. Brian Costello; (NEWSROOM) Joe Pedicino on Samantha & Baby Doll, Chris Love's return, Steven DeTruth; Irwin d. Falcone; (REPLAY) Taylor-Garvin vs. Davises saga; (NORTH AMERICAN TITLE) Patriot d. Anthony by DQ to retain belt when Scotty brings chain in ring.

(LUCHA LIBRE) - Blue Demon Jr./Apolo Dantes/El Hijo del Solitario d. Penzona/Javier Llanes/La Bestia Salvaje 2 straight falls; El Misterioso/Kato Kung Lee I/El Volador d. Blue Panther/Kung Fu/El Chicco Herodes 2-3; Konnan el Barbaro/Los Caras/Atlantis d. El Pirata Morgan/M.S. I/El Satanico 2-3; (MASCARA CONTRA MASCARA---No Time Limit, No Draw, No Mercy) Mascara Ano Dos Mil d. Anibal 2-3. DRAW-PLUS.

(WWF/SYN) - [SUPERSTARS {complete matches not available}]: (WINNERS) Flair, Rockers, Bret Hart, I.R. Schyster, Undertaker, Jim Duggan/Sgt. Slaughter; (ROYAL RUMBLE REPORT) More entrants named.
[CHALLENGE]: Owen Hart/Jim Neidhart d. Kato/Brooklyn Brawler; (OTHER WINNERS) Virgil, Beverly Bros., Skimmer, Kerry Von Erich, Nasty Boys.

(WWEU/SUPERSTARS) - Samuel F. Kent dresses as Santa Claus for annual Superstars Christmas party. Steven DeTruth says Sam is the Ghost of Christmas Present come to life.

(PORTLAND) - [OPEN] Announcement of Dec. 28 as final broadcast of PORTLAND WRESTLING. Don Coss asks fans to write KPTV thank-yous for carrying PW; Grappler d. Don Harris on reversal after Harris scored pin w. feet on ropes. Barry Owen tells Sandy Barr what happened for reversal; (SEG) Harris Bros. say tape of their tarring-and-feathering has disappeared; Al Madrid d. C.W. Bergstrom w. loaded mask headbutt; (ANGLE) Ron Harris begins arguing with Don Owen. Steve Doll decks Harris but Don Harris runs in & bashes Doll w. chair. Don grabs Don Owen by jacket & starts shaking. Owen doesn't sell & kicks Don Harris in leg. Harris slaps Don Owen across face. Grappler finally chases

MATWATCH

Page 8/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

Harrises; (FIESTA GARDEN) Madril says Portland guys will be around forever whether or not on TV. Grappler comes out & makes Madril admit his mask is one of Grappler's old ones. Grappler turns to leave & blocks Madril's attempted ambush but Al blocks Grappler's punch & decks Grap. Madril gouges Grap until he gets crotch-kicked, unties laces on Al's mask & pulls it off to nose when Al escapes; Brickhouse Brown/Jesse Barr d. Mike Miller/Billy Jack Haynes but Miller/Haynes attack faces after. Haynes tosses Miller's 2x4 inside but ref catches it. Miller kicks Sandy Barr, throws over top & grabs 2x4. Heels clothesline Brickhouse w. 2x4 & get Jesse's bullrope away; John Rambo d. Moondog Moretti.

(NEW PWTW) - [GA/1989] Comrade Busick d. Tim Ashley; (GLOBAL) Sultaker d. Tony George; (CLASSIC/CWA) Adrian Street/Bill Dundee d. Hollywood Blondes; (LPWA) Reggie Bennett d. Diane Von Hoffman; (INTL/STAMPEDE/6-MAN) Chris Benoit/Owen Hart/Biff Wellington d. Cuban Assassins/Mike Moore; (GLOBAL) Gilbert d. Irwin.

LINES OF THE WEEK

1. Paul E. Dangerously, WCW: "I'm going to continue to hurt people until I get a seat on the board of directors, Mr. Herd." 2. Gorilla Monsoon/Bobby Heenan, PTW, on Sherri Martel: (GM) "Does she really think she looks good with all that garbage on her face?" (BH) "It's not garbage. It's called style. I guess your favorite's Kate Smith." 3. Rev. Slick, PTW, to Heenan: "I'm praying for you, brother." 4. Eddie Gilbert, MLW, on Scott Hudson: "Obviously, his wife has him tied down at home." 5. Steven DeTruth, MLW, on Craig Johnson: "The intelligence level of your typical wrestling announcer is somewhat akin to the evolutionary level of the paramedum." 6. De Truth, PWTW: "WCW has announced STARRCADE '91, THE BATTLE BOWL, THE LETHAL LOTTERY. Yep, 3 names for one pay-per-view. Go figure these guys out, will ya?" 7. DeTruth/Hudson, PWTW: (SD) "The Young Pistols have finally woken up and smelled the coffee. Now they're really getting the babes." (SH) "Coffee and babes?" 8. DeTruth, PWTW: Jushin Liger: an amazing wrestler, to be sure, but what a ridiculous suit! Jushin, we gotta talk, babe." 9. DeTruth, PWTW: "I'm sure that all you Georgia All-Star fans should recognize Marcus Alexander Bagwell as being none other than Mad Dog Joe." 10. DeTruth, WVEU, on Boni Blackstone/ Samuel F. Kent: "Thank you-a, thank you-a, Bobby & Cissy. That's-a one of my-a favorite-a polkas." 11. DeTruth, WVEU, on Kent: "Sam, your mouthwash. It ain't making it." 12. Kimberly Murphy/Jerry Moshenberg, LARRY KATZ SHOW, on sponsor Pizza Express: (JM) "That's a great pickup offer." (KM) "Yes, you know all about pickups, Jerry." 13. Jesse Barr, PORTLAND: "Wrestling's been on channel 12 since I was a little boy." 14. Al Madril, PORTLAND: "Don Owen, the reason you're losing TV is you're always letting the brats in free. You should charge kids twice the price and maybe you could afford some television." 15. Buddy Rose, PORTLAND: "I won't wrestle on TV unless the place is sold out." 16. Jim Cornette, LPWA: "Get out the All-Cliche notes...Joe (Pedicino) just used another one."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Dick Vitale, THE GAME OF LIFE: "Everybody wants to be a pro player. Why? Why not be a pro person?" 2. Joe Pedicino, MLW, in answer to where Handsome Stranger is: "He got a better offer for more money to go to WCW and who could blame him." 3. DeTruth, PWTW: "Unfortunately, Owen Hart's tag partner is still the

sleep-inducing Jim Neidhart, who I'm told has been taking wrestling lessons from Todd Champion of late." 4. Curt Hennig, PTW: "Mr. Perfect is the one person who knows more about the World Wrestling Federation than you do, McMahon."

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK - 1. Heenan, PTW, to Rev. Slick: "You don't work in the daytime as Al Green, do you?" 2. Gilbert, GWF, to Craig Johnson: "What kind of shock absorbers did you ride on coming in here tonight?" 3. Lord Alfred Hayes, PTW, on Jamieson: "What does he know about wrestling?"

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. LEX LUGERETTE (DeTruth on Chris Chavis). 2. HUDSON'S MONKEY SIDE-KICK (DeTruth on Johnson). 3. SCOTT "WHERE IS MY HAIRLINE THIS WEEK?" HUDSON (DeTruth on Hudson).

ALL-CLICHE TEAM - Monsoon, PTW: "...a force to be reckoned with."

BOO AWARD - WWF PRIME TIME, for repeat showing of Jake Roberts slapping Liz Poffo. We get the point, guys, and it isn't a very respectable one.

1991 Annual MATWATCH: THE FINAL CHAPTER

While we're taking a Christmas hiatus, we're quietly working on the structure for the annual finale and I think you'll find it interesting reading. We'll look at previously-untold stories about how MATWATCH faced threats and tampering with our telephone equipment. We'll tell you who have been the most influential people during our four years and who have been the biggest disappointments.

In addition, we'll offer our usual standard features: the top 15 TV stories of 1991, the Wrestling Broadcasting System schedule of fine programming and our naming of the final MATWATCH Man of the Year---and this year's choice promises to be interesting and, perhaps, a surprise.

PRICE: \$13 (U.S./CANADA), \$21 (OVERSEAS).

Check, cash or money order to: MATWATCH, 16 ROBIN HOOD LANE, JACKSON TN 38305.

FINAL MATWATCH RATES

If your mailing label says FINAL ISSUE, the cost to subscribe through the Jan. 27 closing issue of MATWATCH is \$6.25 (U.S./Canada), \$10.50 (Overseas).

For succeeding closeout rates, check below:

Expiration Date	U.S./Canada	Overseas
12/30/91	\$5.00	\$9.00
1/6/92	\$3.75	\$7.00
1/13/92	\$2.50	\$5.00
1/20/92	\$1.25	\$3.00

THE FINAL FOUR

For a cool post-Yule gift, you can send the final four issues of MATWATCH for someone other than at your address. Our Final 4 gift set is \$4. Check, cash or money order to: MATWATCH, 16 ROBIN HOOD LANE, JACKSON TN 38305.

MATWATCH EDITORIAL

In a three-part series, A LOOK AT US, in early fall, MATWATCH attempted to take a critical look at the state of newsletters and mat journalism, including its own flaws.

In some corners, the series was applauded; in others, the reaction was defensive. Regardless, the trilogy created discussion and debate.

One area we failed to focus on is a growing base of computer bulletin boards. Both leading databases, CompuServ and Prodigy offer communication exchanges on wrestling for anyone with a computer and a modem.

Unfortunately, this past week, one of the dangers of these bulletin boards surfaced. And despite criticism tossed in the direction of MATWATCH when we suggested age can be a factor in journalistic immaturity, we raise the issue again concerning unqualified comments made on Prodigy last Monday.

Comments were made by one Andrew Goldberger, age either 16 or 17, according to people familiar with the writer. Mr. Goldberger's remarks were directed at wrestler and GWF booker Eddie Gilbert.

Gilbert did not attend the American Wrestling Federation debut card in Asbury Park NJ, as booked. He had been told he would receive a prepaid plane ticket to leave from Dallas, where Global had taped the night before. The ticket did not arrive. Jim Cornette and Stan Lane also did not appear when air tickets, likewise, did not come to their residences. New York wrestling journalist John Arezzi confirmed that.

Goldberger accused Gilbert, on Prodigy, of being part of a "ripoff scam," saying he was paid \$1,000 per night and did not show. The young writer cited how Gilbert has been praised for his creativity. Goldberger then wrote: "He (Gilbert) also has the morals and ethics of the business."

MATWATCH questions whether Goldberger has ever talked to Eddie Gilbert. Whether he understands the seriousness of a charge that Gilbert has engaged in a ripoff. How a teenager who likely has never met Gilbert can accurately judge the man's professional morals and ethics.

Gilbert would be the first to suggest he is not a perfect human, nor has such an individual existed in nearly 2,000 years. But to use a computer message exchange to trash Gilbert or any other individual in an unqualified fashion without facts to back up charges such as Goldberger raised is irresponsible, immature and potentially libelous. Gilbert will likely ignore it as the thoughts of a misinformed kid. We, frankly, are embarrassed by it. At the very least, Goldberger owes Gilbert a fast apology.

Graham's Interview

TITAN: "WE'RE NOT SURE IF WE'LL RESPOND"

STAMFORD CT--World Wrestling Federation officials say they're not sure if they'll offer a response to an interview given the syndicated *INSIDE EDITION* by former WWF champion Superstar Billy Graham.

In a telephone interview last Tuesday, WWF spokesman Steve Planamenta told MATWATCH: "Their story, as it sounds now, sounds very limited. It's pretty much Billy Graham calling Hulk (Hogan) a liar. It could be a publicity stunt for his ever-there lawsuit."

Planamenta was read a transcript of the Graham interview by *IE* producers Dec. 12, three days after the taping. According to insiders, Graham told the TV tabloid newsmagazine he injected a number of WWF wrestlers, including himself and Hogan, with steroids during his tenure with TitanSports, and attempted to cast a shroud on Hogan's role model image.

Graham has retained attorneys for more than a year in an effort to bring legal action against the WWF, its owner Vince McMahon Jr., and a steroid manufacturer but no lawsuit has been filed. After reportedly growing antsy over no movement with the suit, Graham has gone against initial wishes of his lawyers and offered the interview to the King World-owned series and plans a January one-on-one with ESPN's Roy Firestone.

"If we do respond," said Planamenta, "we do want them (*IE*) to understand changes that are taking place." Planamenta said he had given producers the phone numbers of physicians administering steroid testing in the WWF but as of midweek, the WWF publicist said the doctors had not been contacted.

"We're still deciding if we're going to respond," said Planamenta, saying initial reports of potential legal action against King World are premature. "Billy Graham's been saying the same thing for two years now and I don't know that he's shed any new light on anything he's been claiming. Besides, we are legitimately creating a successful drug testing program which is going to be a model for this industry. We want the program to see that. Let them talk to our doctors, which I hope they will. Then, let them decide whether they have a story."

Planamenta said Titan was yet to be contacted by ABC's *20/20*, which is also doing an investigation into the wrestling-steroid connection. The *INSIDE EDITION* piece is expected to air either in late January or during the early part of the February ratings sweeps for local markets.

Soon to Be on New TV Outlet

UIW BACK IN ACTION

BALTIMORE--Four months after being given up for dead, Universal Independent Wrestling is back in business with top stars Axl Rotten, Neal Superior and Rasta the Voodoomon.

The Baltimore-based promotion lost its slot on net affiliate WJR in September after a championship tournament in which a promoter's car was reportedly turned over by wrestlers who were told at intermission they would not be paid for the evening.

Sources close to UIW have told MATWATCH the promotion will be back on commercial TV in January. The group is negotiating for--and will likely get--the 8-9 a.m. slot Saturdays on WNUV (channel 54), one hour before WCW WORLD WIDE.

The promotion reportedly has a fresh infusion of capital from a new investor. UIW returns to the air approximately one month before the startup of the Baltimore-area's new Wrestling Independent Network, which will feature some of the UIW performers in crossover roles (Rasta, Superior, Lords of Darkness, Cream Team).

MATWATCH

Page 10/Vol. 4, No. 51-52/Dec. 23-Jan. 5

MATWATCHING

LITTLE LUCK IN TEXAS: Chris Adams, Kevin Von Erich and Ron

and Don Harris will not be picked up by the WWF after their tryouts at **THIS TUESDAY IN TEXAS**.

TV DEBUT: Chris Chavis will finally make a TV debut in the series of shows to air from Texas. But Chris Walker will continue to work arena undercards for more seasoning before getting a TV berth.

NO LANG SYNE: WWF will not do its usual year-in-review show after taping four hours in New Haven and four hours in Texas. Steve Planamenta said he was not sure why.

NOR IN ATLANTA: Neither does WCW have an official TV yearender booked, unless it turns up on a **MAIN EVENT** show. Global will do a two-part yearender, beginning Dec. 28 (see **IDIOTS**).

AFTER-CHRISTMAS PARTY: WCW's guys were still getting their body clocks adjusted after taping two weeks of the Saturday show Monday at Center Stage. Paul E. and the Dangerous Alliance all came out in tuxedos, with Paul threatening the same treatment to Dustin Rhodes, Ron Simmons, Barry Windham and Ricky Steamboat as Sting received.

OUT OF YORK?: The final split between Terry Taylor and the York Foundation comes on the Jan. 4 show when Terry defeats Terry Bronson, then tells Alexandra York (Terri Boatright) he doesn't need the group, smashes the computer and leaves Alex speechless.

SID ZBYSZKO: On the Dec. 28 show, Larry Zbyszko does an act which is reminiscent of Sid Vicious. He beats Scott Sandlin, then a stretcher comes out and Larry Z then knocks Scott off the stretcher.

GOOD EXAMPLES: Role models they, the Patriots (who lost a loser-leave-TBS bout on the 21st), sit in the crowd on the 28th during a Young Pistols match and lead the crowd in the chant of "**PISTOLS SUCK!**"

THE BRAWL CONTINUES: After a Van Hammer-Paul Lee match on Jan. 4, we're told Cactus Jack delivers a wicked DDT to Hammer on the exit ramp.

THE FAMILY FEUD: A Dustin Rhodes-Arn Anderson match on the 4th leads to an 8-way brawl with Dustin/Steamboat/Simmons/Windham vs. Eaton/Austin/Zbyszko/Arn.

ON THE LINE: Craig Johnson has officially inked a one-year deal with PRIME Network to do the Major Indoor Lacrosse League. His first game will be in Detroit Jan. 17 at 5 p.m., meaning you can see Craig at 4 (EST) on ESPN with Global and at 5 on PRIME.

CHRISTMAS WITH EDDIE: Last weekend Terry Garvin beat Eddie Gilbert clean in the middle at Global tapings, so this past Friday, Eddie cheated to keep his TV title. That sets up the Dec. 27 return where three fans search Eddie before the match but he'll still find a way to smuggle something into the 2-out-of-3 affair.

NOTHING BUT DeTRUTH: Steven DeTruth (Steve Prazak) makes his official debut on Global's **MAJOR LEAGUE** on the Dec. 28 yearender.

GWF YEARENDER II: The Jan. 4 review show focuses on a profile of The Patriot (Del Wilkes) and includes a "whatever happened to?..." segment, in which Joe Pedicino is refreshingly candid about what has happened to some of the Global departures. In answer to a fan question about the Handsome Stranger (Mark Bagwell), Pedicino says: "He got an offer for more money from WCW, so he took it, and who can blame him?"

AN ALL-STAR PARTY: John Arezzi hosted his annual **PRO WRESTLING SPOTLIGHT** Christmas party Sunday on radio. Cactus Jack was the co-host. Paul E. Dangerously was skedded to drop by, as were Missy Hyatt and Jason Hervey. That entire combination in itself is unpredictable.

CHRISTMAS IN PORTLAND: The Bruise Brothers (Ron & Don Harris) face Steve Doll & Grappler (Len Denton) in a Don Owen-ordered cage match Christmas night in Portland. If Doll/Grappler win, the Bruises will be handcuffed inside the cage and Owen gets to whip them.

STILL GOING?: It may not be the Eveready Energizer bunny but Owen is going to try to keep going into January and February, even after losing KPTV Dec. 28 as an outlet. But most veteran Portland fans feel it's a losing battle.

BIG BOY BACK: The Portland TV death comes just as Buddy Rose has reinvaded the area. He challenged Crush (Brian Adams) to a double title match, for the All-Asian and Pacific Northwest titles, on TV.

THE ENGLISH CROWDS: A little more on the WCW British swing. They began with 2,000 the first night at the Royal Olympian Hall, then grew to 4,000 the next night and nearly 6,000 the last. But there was a catch. A ton of freebies went out the first evening. Then, a pitch was made that if you brought your ticket stub to the window after the show, you'd get freebies for the next two nights---hence, the exponential increase.

CABBIE HELP: We're told a cab driver, who apparently publishes some kind of newsletter for cabbies in London, also was pitching freebies for the shows.

GOOD TV RETURN: One good outcome to the trip: WCW has negotiated a return to TV (from which it was bounced by behind-the-scenes political maneuverings from TitanSports before the tour) in what's been termed a very favorable slot in January.

BUT WHAT ABOUT ST. LOO?: Still, being forced off TV in St. Louis has WCW scrambling, just one year after having its **STARRCADE** show there.

A TYPICAL STORY: The story Titan is telling a number of local stations is that this will finally be the year Turner throws in the towel on WCW. A few station managers who have had less-than-marginal success with WCW in the ratings have bought the story.

SYNDICATION NOTES: South Atlantic Pro Wrestling is testing the waters for syndication beyond the Carolinas. With Manny Fernandez at the helm, a number of stations (including my own, WBBJ) were sent faxes to survey interest

Black Saturday: 1984's Pearl Harbor

Dick Bourne was one of the country's biggest fans of TBS wrestling. Saturday at 6:05 p.m. was a ritual. The little studio. Two hours of television. Gordon Solie.

But on one of our many trips to mat shows around the Southeast, Dick remembered one of the blackest days in his TV life. The date was July 14, 1984.

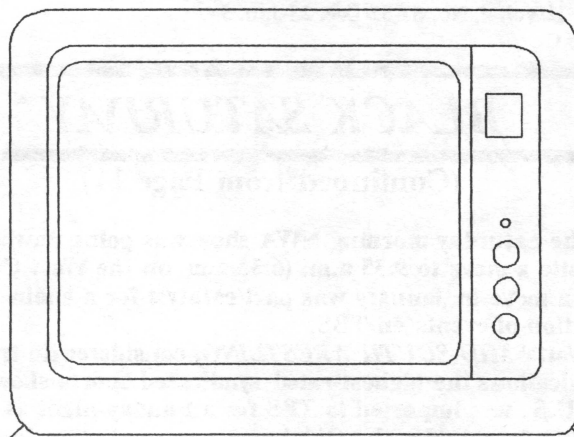
"It was my birthday," said Bourne. "My wife and my parents had given me a nice day. It was, for all intents and purposes, a good birthday. But everybody knew to get out of the way at 6:00. When I turned on that set, I was hoping to see the latest between Ronnie Garvin and Jake Roberts. Instead, I looked up and saw Freddie Miller sitting in a studio. I said, 'What's this?' The show said *WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING* but this wasn't the show I knew. Freddie was sitting there, pitching to all of these matches in New York and it was all so strange. It didn't feel right. It was like your worst nightmare. I suddenly realized the WWF must have taken over."

Indeed, it had. In a move brewing for several months, Vince McMahon Jr. had purchased controlling interest in Georgia Championship Wrestling, Inc., the group which produced TBS's three hours a week of mat television. Former NWA stars Jack and Jerry Brisco had sold their interests to McMahon, who—until July 11—owned 42 per cent interest in GCW. Then, after the culmination of a major dispute between GCW primary stockholder Jim Barnett and minority owner Ole Anderson, Barnett sold his shares to McMahon.

In one fell swoop, McMahon suddenly controlled every significant time period in cable television for his World Wrestling Federation. Initially, the shock waves rattled. TBS was bombarded by more than 300 complaining telephone calls during the show's two hours. Miller, a well-liked Atlantan, whose "be there" pronouncements heralded Georgia card promotions in the 1970s was small consolation. To veteran fans who had watched wrestling on Ted Turner's station since 1972, when it was still WTCC, these were not "our wrestlers." And this happened to the top-rated slot in cable television for any kind of show.

Dick Bourne was one example. "My parents and my wife couldn't understand what was wrong with me. After all, why would a stupid wrestling show on TV change my mood?" Bourne said. "But it was like somebody had stuck a knife in me. I didn't enjoy the rest of my birthday, just thinking about having to be stuck with that WWF circus."

McMahon dismissed the complaints to TBS as orchestrated. "Frankly," McMahon told an Atlanta newspaper, "I doubt if many of those phone calls (from viewers) were spontaneous," hinting strongly that Anderson had trumpeted the entire barrage. Anderson denied that in a phone conversation with MATWATCH this year.



50 YEARS OF MAT TV, PART VIII

Among the irritation triggered was the sudden disappearance of wrestling's father figure/Walter Cronkite, Gordon Solie, from the TBS perch he had maintained since January 1973 when Ed Capral left to join Ann Gunkel's All-South Wrestling after a Georgia promotional split between Gunkel and NWA honcho Paul Jones. Solie was the institution, yet McMahon's public statements indicated he hoped to sign Solie soon. He claimed in the Atlanta print story he was negotiating with Solie. A deal never materialized. For seven months, Miller remained ensconced in the studio. While production values of the show were far superior to the old TBS studio show, *WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING* took on an antiseptic look which was foreign to its Southern traditions.

So huge were the protests that Turner took defensive measures. First, NWA wrestling was restored four weeks later, albeit to a horrible 7:35 a.m. time slot, with Solie as host. Anderson, veteran Columbus, Ga., promoter Fred Ward and Ward's son-in-law Ralph Freed bankrolled the series and, for a brief time, forged an alliance with Carolina-based promoter Jim Crockett and Memphis' Jerry Jarrett for a talent exchange which saw Jerry Lawler, Tully Blanchard, Ivan Koloff, King Kong Bundy, Jimmy Hart---and even Randy Savage---shuttled in for the Wednesday night tapings in Atlanta. But the alliance soon crumbled and Anderson's money began to decline.

Traditional NWA stars Roberts, Dick Slater, Brad Armstrong and Tim Horner were among those who defected to Bill Watts' Mid-South Wrestling. Tommy Rich returned to Memphis. The early morning show filtered into a focus on a Ronnie Garvin-Bob Roop feud (with an occasional guest shot by Ox Baker) and Anderson and Thunderbolt Patterson as tag champions. Anderson then imported more and more rookies, including a younger Fred Ottman (as Siegfried, managed by J.R. Hogg).

All the while, McMahon maintained control of the lucrative Saturday and Sunday "best of" slots on TBS. At first, the ratings held, despite viewer protests. *WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING*, the week of McMahon's takeover, had a 4.6 national rating in 1.43 million homes. But eventually, heavy Southern apathy toward the WWF performers created a Saturday erosion. Ratings for the Sunday afternoon retrospective WWF show eased ahead in

BLACK SATURDAY

(Continued from Page 11)

The Saturday morning NWA show was going nowhere, despite a move to 9:35 a.m. (6:35 a.m. on the West Coast). But a move in January was part catalyst for a chain reaction of events on TBS.

Watts' *MID-SOUTH WRESTLING*, considered in trade publications the highest-rated syndicated sports show in the U.S., was imported to TBS for a Sunday night at 7 slot. Within four weeks, the Oklahoma-produced show became the dominant number one show in cable television, often topping a 5 rating and drawing enormous viewer mail for its performers, including Hacksaw Jim Duggan, Ted DiBriase and Jake Roberts—all to go on to WWF stardom in later years—and new performers Steve Williams, Terry Taylor and Buddy Landell.

Not only was the WWF being eclipsed in the ratings for both its USA and TBS shows, a behind-the-scenes power struggle between Turner and McMahon was erupting. It involved issues of both cable exclusivity and control of commercial time on the superstation.

Turner was incensed when McMahon refused to give WTBS exclusivity for the WWF product. McMahon intended to maintain a cable dynasty with his shows' national exposure also on WOR in New York and highly-rated slots on USA. "Ted just couldn't handle it. It ate him up," McMahon said in an interview to *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*. Turner also balked at Titan Sports' desire to basically buy the time periods on TBS and control commercial sales themselves.

Eight weeks before the highly-promoted first Wrestlemania spectacular, the WWF made two controversial moves. First, it rechristened the Saturday TBS show *GEORGIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING*, whacked it back to one hour and returned to an in-studio show with a revamped set and live audience. Despite bringing in familiar performers such as the Briscos and Ricky Steamboat, viewers were unimpressed, even when Hulk Hogan and Mr. T made an Atlanta appearance to plug the closed-circuit spectacular. A low point came when the dominant TBS star of the 1970s, Mr. Wrestling II, was imported and forced to do a 15-minute Broadway with WWF junior heavyweight champion Les Thornton, whom II would have destroyed in his NWA days. Plus, Gorilla Monsoon—very regional in appeal—was sent to Atlanta to host the studio series and seemed completely out of place to traditional TBS viewers.

Finally, the dispute over commercial time boiled over and McMahon was ordered off the superstation by Turner, who also wanted the Saturday show to revert to two hours. In a complex deal, McMahon sold the remainder of his committed time on WTBS to Crockett. The complexity forced the Watts NWA show off TBS, as well—much to the dismay of its growing legion of fans. Plus, Crockett assumed control of Anderson's Saturday morning hour and unceremoniously dumped Solie in favor of nationally-unknown Tony Schiavone and the promoter's brother, David Crockett.

That one transaction alone may have been the forestalling of the eventual demise of the National Wrestling Alliance. "If they had gone another year or two

without any national cable exposure, the NWA—as we knew it—would have been dead," says one performer who has worked closely with both Crockett and the WWF. "It was like when Ted Turner bought MGM and literally saved Turner Broadcasting from disaster. Crockett's move at least kept the NWA alive with a national hook, even though he was ill-equipped to market his product in the fashion of McMahon."

As for Dick Bourne, he was happy—except he didn't like the way Solie was bounced. "I missed the first show (in April 1985) when Crockett took over Saturday morning because I wasn't expecting it," said Bourne. "Then, I turned on TV that night at 6 and saw the boys were back. I just wish they hadn't forced us to watch David Crockett."

RATINGS RAP

MAIN EVENT TAKES TOP

Week Ending Dec. 16	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Year Ago
WCW Main Event (TBS 12/15)	3.0/5.3	1.7 million	2.4/4.5
WWF All-American (USA 12/15)	2.8/7.5	1.62 million	2.7/7.2
WCW Wild Champ. (TBS 12/14)	2.6/5.2	1.49 million	2.9/5.8
WWF Prime Time (USA 12/16)	2.6/3.7	1.49 million	2.9/4.3
WCW Power Hour (TBS 12/14)	1.8/6.7	1.02 million	1.5/5.8

MATWATCHING (Continued from Page 10)

in carrying the shows. Greg Price is handling the syndication effort.

MELT DOWN: As some of you LPWA viewers have seen, Reggie Bennett's ballooned up to 220 pounds and inside word is she has to get some it off to continue to get a major push with Tor Berg.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Because of spacing limitations, we cannot complete the MATWATCH CATALOGUE this week but assure any interested editors, we will include you in our first January issue, if you'll drop us a card. Again, have a wonderful holiday and remember, no MATWATCH next week.

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